

GRAUSTARK

By
GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON

Copyright, 1901, by Herbert S. Stone

"I am a fool, an ingrate! You have been too gentle with me. For this despicable act of mine I cannot ask pardon, and it would be beneath you to grant it. I have hurt you, and I can never atone. I forgot how sacred is your throne. Let me depart in disgrace." He stood erect as if to forsake the throne he had stained, but she, swayed by a complete reversal of feeling, pleadingly touched his arm.

"Stay! It is my throne, after all. I shall divide it, as well as the sin, with you. Sit down again, I beg of you. For a brief spell I would rule beside a man who is fit to be a king, but who is a desecrator. There can be no harm, and no one shall be the wiser for this sentimental departure from royal custom. We are children anyhow, mere children."

With an exclamation of delight he resumed his position beside her. His hand trembled as he took up hers to carry it to his lips. "We are children—playing with fire," he murmured, this ingrate, this fool!

She allowed her hand to lie limply in his, her head sinking to the back of the chair. When her hand was near his feverish lips, cool and white and trusting, he checked the upward progress. Slowly he raised his eyes to study her face, finding that hers were closed, the semblance of a smile touching her lips as if they were in a happy dream.

"The lips! The lips! The lips! The madness of love rushed into his heart; the expectant hand was forgotten; his every hope and every desire measured itself against his discretion as he looked upon the tempting face. Could he kiss those lips but once his life would be complete.

With a start she opened her eyes, doubtless at the command of the masterful ones above. The eyes of blue met the eyes of gray in a short, sharp struggle, and the blue went down in surrender. His lips triumphed slowly, drawing closer and closer as if restrained and impelled by the same emotion—arrogant love.

"Open your eyes, darling," he whispered, and she obeyed. Then their lips met—her first kiss of love!

She trembled from head to foot, perfectly powerless beneath the spell. Again he kissed a princess on her throne. At this second kiss her eyes grew wide with terror, and she sprang from his side, standing before him like one bereft of reason.

"Oh, my God! What have you done?" she wailed. He staggered to his feet, dizzy with joy.

"Ha!" cried a gruff voice from the doorway, and the guilty ones whirled to look upon the witness to their blissful crime. Inside the curtains, with carbine leveled at the head of the American, stood Allode, the guard, his face distorted with rage. The princess screamed and leaped between Lorry and the threatening carbine.

"Allode!" she cried in frantic terror. He angrily cried out something in his native tongue and she breathlessly, imploringly replied. Lorry did not understand their words, but he knew that she had saved him from death at the hand of her loyal, erring guard. Allode lowered his gun, bowed low and turned his back upon the throne.

"He would have killed you," she said tremulously, her face the picture of combined agony and relief. She remembered the blighting kisses and then the averted disaster.

"You—what did you say to him?" he asked.

"I—oh, to save you, stupid!" "How did you explain the—the?" He hesitated generously.

"I told him that I had not been—that I had not been!" "Say it!" "That I had not been—offended!" she gasped, standing stiff and straight, with eyes glued upon the obedient guard.

"You were not?" he rapturously cried. "I said it only to save your life!" she cried, turning fiercely upon him. "I shall never forgive you—never! You must go—you must leave here at once! Do you hear? I cannot have you near me now; I cannot see you again. What have I given you the right to say of me?"

"Stop! It is as sacred as"— "Yes, yes; I understand! I trust you, but you must go! Find some excuse to give your friend and go today! Go now!" she cried intensely, first putting her hands to her temples, then to her eyes.

Without waiting to hear his remonstrance, if indeed he had the power to utter one, she gilded swiftly toward the curtains, allowing him to follow at his will. Dazed and crushed at the sudden end to everything, he dragged his footsteps after. At the door she spoke in low, imperative tones to the motionless Allode, who dropped to his knees and muttered a reverential response. As Lorry passed beneath the hand that held the curtain aside he glanced at the face of the man who had been witness to their weakness. He was looking straight ahead, and from his expression it could not have been detected that he knew there was a man on earth save himself. In the hall she turned to him, her face cold and pale.

"I have faithful guards about me now. Allode has said he did not see you in the throne room. He will die before he will say otherwise," she said, her lips trembling with shame.

"By your command?" "By my request. I do not command my men to lie."

Side by side they passed down the quiet hall, silent, thoughtful, the strain of death upon their hearts.

"I shall obey the only command you have given, then. This day I leave the castle. You will let me come again—to see you? There can be no harm!"

"No! You must leave Graustark at once!" she interrupted, the tones low.

"I refuse to go! I shall remain in Edelweiss, near you, just so long as I feel that I may be of service to you."

"I cannot drive you out as I would a thief," she said pointedly.

At the top of the broad staircase he held out his hand and murmured: "Goodbye, your highness."

"Goodbye," she said simply, placing her hand in his after a moment's hesitation. Then she left him.

An hour later the two Americans, one strangely subdued, the other curious, excited and impatient, stood before the castle waiting for the carriage. Count Halfont was with them, begging them to remain, as he could see no reason for the sudden leaving. Lorry assured him that they had trespassed long enough on the court's hospitality and that he would feel much more comfortable at the hotel. Anguish looked narrowly at his friend's face, but said nothing. He was beginning to understand.

"Let us walk to the gates. The count will oblige us by instructing the coachman to follow," said Lorry, eager to be off.

"Allow me to join you in the walk, gentlemen," said Count Caspar, immediately instructing a lackey to send the carriage after them. He and Lorry walked on together, Anguish lingering behind, having caught sight of the Countess Dagmar. That charming and unconventional piece of nobility promptly followed the prime minister's example and escorted the remaining guest to the gate.

Far down the walk Lorry turned for a last glance at the castle from which love had banished him. Yetive was standing on the balcony, looking not at the monastery, but at the exile.

She remained there long after the carriage had passed her gates bearing the Americans swiftly over the white Castle avenue, and there were tears in her eyes.

CHAPTER XV. THE BETROTHAL.

HARRY Anguish was a discreet, forbearing fellow. He did not demand a full explanation of his friend. There was enough natural wit in his merry head to see that in connection with their departure there was something that would not admit of discussion even by confidential friends. He shrewdly formed his own conclusions and held his peace. Nor did he betray surprise when Lorry informed him in answer to a question that he intended to remain in Edelweiss for some time, adding that he could not expect him to do likewise if he preferred to return to Paris. But Mr. Anguish preferred to remain in Edelweiss. Had not the Countess Dagmar told him she would always be happy to see him at the castle, and had he any reason to renounce its walls? And so it was that they tarried together.

Lorry loitered aimlessly, moodily,

about the town, spending gloomy days and wretched nights. He reasoned that it were wisdom to fly, but a force stronger than reason held him in Edelweiss. He ventured several times to the castle wall, but turned back resolutely. There was hope in his breast that she might send for him. There was at least the possibility of seeing her should she ride through the streets. Anguish, on the other hand, visited the castle daily. He spent hours with the pretty countess, undismayed by the noble moths that fluttered about her flame, and he was ever persistent, light hearted and gay. He brought to Lorry's ears all that he could learn of the princess. Several times he had seen her and had spoken with her. She inquired casually after the health of his friend, but nothing more. From the countess he ascertained that her highness was sleeping soundly, eating heartily and apparently enjoying the best of spirits. Information decidedly irritating to the one who received it second hand.

They had been at the hotel for over a week when one afternoon Anguish rushed into the room out of breath and scarcely able to control his excitement. "What's up?" cried Lorry. "Has the countess sacked you?" "Not on your coin! But something is up, and I am its discoverer. You remember what you said about suspecting Prince Gabriel of being the chief rascal in the abduction job? Well, my boy, I am now willing to stake my life that he is the man." The news bearer sat down on the edge of the bed and drew the first long breath he had had in a long time.

"Why do you think so?" demanded the other, all interest.

"Heard him talking just now. I didn't know who the fellow was at first, but he was talking to some strange looking soldiers as I passed. As soon as I heard his voice I knew he was Michael. There isn't any question about it, Lorry. I am positive. He did not observe me, but I suppose by this time he has learned that his little job was frustrated by two Americans who heard the plot near the castle gates. He has nerve to come here, hasn't he?"

"If he is guilty, yes. Still he may feel secure because he is a powerful prince and able to resent any accusation with a show of force. Where is he now?"

"I left him there. Come on. We'll go down, and you can see for yourself."

They hurried to the corridor, which was swarming with men in strange uniforms. There were a few Graustark officers, but the majority of the buzzing conversationists were dressed in a rich gray uniform.

"Who are these strangers?" asked Lorry.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you. Prince Lorenz is also here, and these gray fellows are a part of his retinue. Lorenz has gone on to the castle. What's the matter?" Lorry had turned pale and was reaching for the wall with unsteady hand.

"He has come for his answer," he said slowly, painfully.

"That's right. I hadn't thought of that. I hope she turns him down. But there's Gabriel over yonder. See those three fellows in blue? The middle one is the prince."

Near the door leading to the piazza stood several men, gray and blue. The man designated as Gabriel was in the center, talking gayly and somewhat loudly, puffing at a cigarette between sentences. He was not tall, but he was strongly and compactly built. His hair and cropped beard were as black as coal, his eyes wide, black and lined. It was a pleasure worn face, and Lorry shuddered as he thought of the prince in the power of this evil looking wretch. They leisurely made their way to a spot near the talkers. There was no mistaking the voice. Prince Gabriel and Michael were one and the same beyond all doubt. But how to prove it to the satisfaction of others? Skepticism would follow any attempt to proclaim the prince guilty because his voice sounded like that of the chief conspirator. In a matter where whole nations were concerned the gravest importance would be attached to the accusation of a ruler. Satisfying themselves as to the identity of that peculiar voice, the friends passed through to the piazza.

"What's to be done?" asked Anguish, boiling over with excitement.

"We must go to Baron Dangloss, tell him of our positive discovery, and then consult Count Halfont."

"And her royal highness, of course."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Lorry, flicking the ashes from his cigar with a finger that was now steady. He was serving the princess again.

They hurried to the tower and were soon in the presence of the fierce little chief of police. Lorry had spent many hours with Dangloss of late, and they had become friends. His grim old face blanched perceptibly as he heard the assertions of the young men. He shook his head despairingly.

"It may be as you say, gentlemen, but I am afraid we can do nothing. To charge a prince with such a crime and on such evidence would be madness. I am of your belief, however. Prince Gabriel is the man I have suspected. Now I am convinced. Before we can do anything in such a grave matter it will be necessary to consult the princess and her ministers. In case we conclude to accuse the Prince of Danglossen it must be after careful and judicious thought. There are many things to consider, gentlemen. For my part, I would be overjoyed to seize the villain and to serve him as we did his tools, but my hands are tied, you see. I would suggest that you go at once to the princess and Count Halfont, tell them of your suspicions."

"Not suspicious, my lord—facts," interrupted Anguish.

"Well, then, facts, and ascertaining how they feel about taking up a proposition that may mean war. May I—may I—come at once to me with their answer."

Lorry in his brief note prayed for a short audience for himself and Mr. Anguish, requesting that Count Halfont be present. He informed her that his mission was of the most imperative nature and that it related to a discovery made concerning the prince who had tried to abduct her. In conclusion he wrote that Baron Dangloss had required him to lay certain facts before her and that he had come with no intention to annoy her.

While they sat in the waiting room they saw through the glass doors dozens of richly attired men and women in the hall beyond. They were conversing animatedly, Graustark men and women with dejected faces, Aphabians with exultation glowing in every glance. Lorry's heart sank within him. It seemed hours before the servant returned to bid them follow him. Then his blood leaped madly through veins that had been chilled and lifeless. He was to see her again.

Their guide conducted them to a

FERTILIZERS

To give best results, must be used intelligently and in sufficient quantity and above all the best quality should be used.

What constitutes best quality is, first, the amount of ingredients needed, such as ammonia, Potash and Phosphoric Acid, and next the proper manipulation of these ingredients so as to form a well balanced whole.

It must also have to be in such mechanical condition as to be easily and well distributed.

Experience

has shown that the goods manufactured in Anderson, S. C., by the

Anderson Phosphate and Oil Company

have all the qualities mentioned above and should undoubtedly rank as the best of fertilizers. We have letters from some of the most prominent planters in the South bearing out these statements.

If you are now using

Anderson Fertilizers

you should continue so to do, but if you are not, you should lose no time in changing your brand and coming into the fold with the most successful planters and use these goods.

The roads are good now, the railroads very badly congested and will be in worse shape later on, so you should haul your fertilizers home before it is too late, as you will not have to pay for them any the sooner.

Agents at every railroad station; call on them, or write to the home office for information.

Anderson Phosphate and Oil Company,

ANDERSON S. C.

FOLGER, THORNLEY & CO., Agents, Pickens, S. C.

It is possible that they will call for a consultation with the ministers, nobles and high officers. Still, I fear they will be unwilling to risk much on the rather flimsy proof you can give. Gabriel is powerful, and we do not seek a war with him. There is another foe for whom we are quietly whetting our swords." The significant remark caused both listeners to prick up their ears. But he disappointed their curiosity, and they were left to speculate as to whom the other foe might be. Did he mean that Graustark was secretly, slyly, making ready to resist, treaty or no treaty?

It required prolonged urging on the part of Anguish to persuade Lorry to accompany him to the castle, but, when once determined to go before the princess with their tale, he was eager, impatient, to cross the distance that lay between the hotel and the forbidden grounds. They walked rapidly down Castle avenue and were soon at the gates. The guard knew them, and they were admitted without a word. As they hurried, through the park they saw many strange men in gray, gaudy uniforms, and it occurred to Lorry that their visit, no matter how great its importance, was ill timed. Prince Lorenz was holding the center of the stage.

Anguish, with his customary impulsiveness, overruled Lorry's objections, and they proceeded toward the entrance. The guards of the princess saluted profoundly, while the minions of Lorenz stared with ill bred wonder upon these two tall men from another world. It could be seen that the castle was astir with excitement, subdued and pregnant with thriving hopes and fears. The nobility of Graustark was there. The visitors of Aphabian were being entertained.

At the castle doors the two men met their first obstacle, but they had anticipated its presence. Two guards halted them peremptorily.

"We must see her royal highness," said Anguish, but the men could not understand him. They stoically stood their ground, shaking their heads.

"Let us find some one who can understand us," advised Lorry, and in a few moments they presented themselves before the guards, accompanied by a young nobleman with whom they had acquaintance. He succeeded in advancing them to the reception hall inside the doors and found for them a servant who would carry a message to the princess if it were possible to gain her presence. The nobleman doubted very much, however, if the message hastily written by Lorry could find its way to her, as she had never been so occupied as now.

Lorry in his brief note prayed for a short audience for himself and Mr. Anguish, requesting that Count Halfont be present. He informed her that his mission was of the most imperative nature and that it related to a discovery made concerning the prince who had tried to abduct her. In conclusion he wrote that Baron Dangloss had required him to lay certain facts before her and that he had come with no intention to annoy her.

While they sat in the waiting room they saw through the glass doors dozens of richly attired men and women in the hall beyond. They were conversing animatedly, Graustark men and women with dejected faces, Aphabians with exultation glowing in every glance. Lorry's heart sank within him. It seemed hours before the servant returned to bid them follow him. Then his blood leaped madly through veins that had been chilled and lifeless. He was to see her again.

Their guide conducted them to a

small anteroom, where he left them. A few moments later the door opened, and there swept quickly into the room the Countess Dagmar, not the princess. Her face was drawn with the trouble and sorrow she was trying so hard to conceal. Both men were on their feet in an instant, advancing to meet her.

"The princess? Is she ill?" demanded Lorry.

"Not ill, but mad, I fear," answered she, giving a hand to each. "Mr. Lorry, she bids me say to you that she cannot see you. She appreciates the importance of your mission and thanks you for the interest you have taken. Also she authorizes me to assure you that nothing can be done at present regarding the business."

"She refuses to see us," said Anguish, his face whiter than ever.

"Nay," she begs that her highness is weary with and distressed today, and, I fear, cannot endure all that is happening. She is so parently calm and composed, but I who know her so well can see the strain beneath."

"Surely she must see the urgency of quick action in this matter of ours!" cried Anguish half angrily. "We are not dogs to be kicked out of the castle. We have a right to be treated fairly!"

"We cannot censure the princess," Harry said Lorry calmly. "We have come because we would befriend her, and she sees fit to reject our good offices. There is but one thing left for us to do—depart as we came."

"But I don't like it a little bit," growled the other.

"If you only knew, Mr. Anguish, you would not be so harsh and unjust," remonstrated the lady warmly. Turning to Lorry, she said, "She asked me to hand you this, and to bid you retain it as a token of her undying esteem."

She handed him a small, exquisite miniature of the princess framed in gold inlaid with rubies. He took it dumbly in his fingers, but dared not look at the portrait it contained. With what might have seemed disrespect he dropped the treasure into his coat pocket.

"Tell her I shall always retain it as a token of her esteem," he said. "And now may I ask whether she handed my note to her uncle, the count?"

The countess blushed in a most unaccountable manner.

"Not while I was with her," she said, recovering the presence of mind she apparently had lost.

"She destroyed it, I presume," said he, laughing harshly.

"I saw her place it in her bosom, sir, and with the right hand," cried the countess as if betraying a state secret.

"In her—You are telling me the truth?" cried he, his face lighting up.

"Now, see here, Lorry, don't begin to question the countess' word. I won't stand for that," interposed Anguish good humoredly.

Quincy, Sprains and Swelling Cured. "In November, 1901, I caught cold and had the quincy. My throat was swollen so I could hardly breathe. I applied Chamberlain's Pain Balm and it gave me relief in a short time. In two days I was all right," says Mrs. L. Cousins, Otterburn, Mich. Chamberlain's Pain Balm is a liniment and is especially valuable for sprains and swellings. For sale by Pickens Drug Co.

\$10 REWARD—I will pay the above reward for the capture and delivery to me of Clarence Agnew, thirteen years of age and ginger cake color.

John W. Hatcher.

For the most complete and reliable information regarding the business of the Anderson Phosphate and Oil Company, call on or write to the home office for information.

CASTORIA

For Infants and Children.

The Kind You Have Always Bought

Bears the Signature of *Wm. D. Fletcher*

HOLLISTER'S

Rocky Mountain Tea Nuggets

A Busy Medicine for Busy People.

Brings Golden Health and Renewed Vigor.

A specific for Constipation, Indigestion, Liver and Kidney troubles, Pimples, Eczema, Impure Blood, Bad Breath, Sluggish Bowels, Headache and Backache. Its Rocky Mountain Tea in tablet form, 35 cents a box. Genuine made by HOLLISTER DRUG COMPANY, Madison, Wis.

GOLDEN NUGGETS FOR SALLOW PEOPLE

KILL THE COUGH AND CURE THE LUNGS

WITH Dr. King's

New Discovery

FOR CONSUMPTION COUGHS and COLDS

Price 50c & \$1.00 Free Trial.

Surest and Quickest Cure for all THROAT and LUNG TROUBLES, or MONEY BACK.

CHARLESTON & WESTERN CAROLINA RAILWAY.

Arrival and Departure of Trains, Greenville, S. C. Effective April 14, 1902.

DEPARTURES:

6:30 a. m., No. 48 daily except Sunday, for Laurens and intermediate stations. Arrive at Laurens 9:00 a. m.

ARRIVALS:

10:30 a. m., No. 87, daily except Sunday from Laurens and intermediate stations.

6:00 p. m., No. 85, daily except Sunday, from Laurens and intermediate stations.

3:25 p. m., No. 82, daily from Charleston, Sumter, Columbia, Newberry, Clinton, Spartanburg, Augusta, Greenwood, Laurens, etc.

Trains No. 82 and 83 run through between Charleston without change.

J. W. Ligon, Agt. Geo. T. Bryan, Gen. Agt. GREENVILLE, S. C.

Ernest Williams, G. P. & A.

R. M. Brand, Traf. Man. Augusta, Ga.

TO BE CONTINUED.